

SHARE THE JOY

NEW YORK
BOTANICAL GARDEN

AL HITCHENS • 11658 River Rim Road • San Diego, CA 92126-1135 • USA •
alsmail@san.rr.com

Keywords: outreach: education, societies.

Knowledge is not knowledge unless it is shared
—Tao of Leo Song

I have been growing carnivorous plants for about seven years, and during this time, I have noticed something about many carnivorous plant growers: they prefer to share their passion for carnivorous plants only with a few other carnivorous plant growers, and they almost never attempt to “reach out” to the uninformed public to share information about the joys of carnivorous plant growing. Oh, I have seen all of the web sites, and they are commendable, but most are directed at other carnivorous plant growers—the rest of the world does not even know these web sites exist!

A couple of years ago, I assisted with the formation of the San Diego Carnivorous Plant Society (SDCPS). In the process of contacting other carnivorous plant enthusiasts in our area, we noticed this isolationist attitude in quite a few growers. So we decided that spreading the word should be an important part of our Society.

One of the most important objectives of the SDCPS is to educate the general public about carnivorous plants. Not only is this personally rewarding to our members, but this education process has also resulted in many new growers getting started in our area, several of whom have joined our society.

We accomplished this education objective in several ways. First, our President and founder, David Simon, wisely designed our web site (www.sdcps.com) to be very entertaining. When newcomers log onto our site, they are not confronted with an overwhelming volume of complex scientific information and carnivorous plant jargon. Instead, they find a very entertaining site, and they quickly understand that a person can have FUN while growing carnivorous plants!

We reach out to the public in several other ways. To date, we have given a free 45-minute carnivorous plant class to over 3,500 adults and schoolchildren all over the San Diego area. Besides the lecture, we display live plants, conduct feeding demonstrations, and show video clips. Virtually everyone who has attended this class has become enthusiastic about carnivorous plants, and many have become growers.

In addition, we make every effort to have a carnivorous plant display at any and every plant show, fair, exhibit, etc. When visitors see the words, “carnivorous plants”, they flock to our display. They love the plants, and they go home to log onto our site.

The project that is probably having the greatest impact on the public in our area is our sponsorship of carnivorous plant bog gardens. We provide guidance about construction, water, growing media and plant sources. Our members have contributed some of their plants. To date, we have assisted the City of San Diego in establishing a 3 meter \times 3 meter (10 foot \times 10 foot) raised bog garden in the Botanical Building at Balboa Park (see Back Cover), and we worked with the San Diego Zoo to build a small bog garden near the Zoo’s gorilla exhibit (Figure 1). The Balboa Park bog has more than 150 carnivorous plants in it, including a few *Nepenthes* hanging overhead. The Zoo has included a much larger carnivorous plant bog in its Heart of the Zoo III construction project

that is underway now.

All of these projects are accompanied by SDCPS business cards and flyers that are passed out in large numbers. This encourages bog garden visitors to call and request carnivorous plant classes. Then, class attendees log onto our site. Then, site visitors go to our next plant show, open house, etc. Interest is building all over our area.

There is no secret to how we are accomplishing these things. First, we established the objective of educating the public. Then we pursued that objective through many phone calls and e-mails. We have much more than we want to accomplish. And we are having more fun than we ever imagined we would!



Figure 1: A little bog garden at San Diego Zoo.



Figure 2: The exciting and enticing SDCPS logo.